

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

Report to Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - People

2 September 2020

SUPPORT FOR UNPAID FAMILY CARERS

1. Purpose of report

This report highlights some of the themed issues being raised by carers in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, the current areas of support required for carers and the action that is being taken to address that need.

2. Information

Rising levels of care; many carers have been affected by the reduction/closure of services or have declined formal care due to fear of infection. In some cases, carers have benefitted from increased support and recognition from wider family networks and in others, carers are facing significant challenges and increased isolation as many day care and respite services for those depending on care, remain closed due to Government guidance.

The Adult Social Care Transformation Team and Prevention and Personalisation teams are currently working hard to get day care opportunities opened up, but this will be limited in terms of the number of places available due to Covid-19 restrictions. P&P teams have been in touch with individuals and their carers on a fortnightly basis throughout the lockdown and are now starting to have conversations with clients to determine how day care opportunities can be reinstated safely and fairly.

Financial pressures; some carers have had difficulty following a reduction in income or increased living costs. These carers have been referred to food banks, community support groups and specialist financial/welfare benefits organisations.

Working carers; some carers have been expected to return to work, raising concerns about the risk this poses to the person depending on them for care, particularly if formal support cannot resume. The commissioned carers service has provided carers with 'letters of recommendation' to provide evidence of the caring role to employers. There has been a notable increase in the level of information and support delivered to carers requiring financial and employment advice.

Worries and fears; many carers have experienced distress, anxiety, isolation and fatigue alongside worries and concerns for the wellbeing of the person depending on care. These carers have been offered regular telephone support, befriending and/or have been connected with other carers and worked closely with other organisations to reduce duplication and pool resources to reach more carers. The commissioned carer's service has assisted carers to update emergency plans and issued carer identification cards to enable priority access to shopping and other essentials.

Bereavement; many carers have sought bereavement support following the death of loved ones and in some instances, the struggle of coming to terms that the person depending on care, died alone. The carer's service is signposting carers to specialist bereavement, talking therapies and befriending support in addition to offering a counselling service funded through the National Lottery.

Practical issues; the carers service has coordinated practical solutions for carers in relation to food, medicine, continence products, aids, PPE and access to on-line information. The carer's service has resumed carer assessment and support planning and in some cases, this will result in the delivery of a carer personal budget to resource eligible need and improve health and wellbeing.

Carers supporting each other and their local communities; many carers have been linked to the Community Response Unit, the 24/7 Mental Support Health Line, local volunteering and mutual aid schemes. Partnership work is underway to ensure these services develop to meet the early identification and support of carers, particularly for hidden carers and those who have care and support needs in their own right. The carer's service is also delivering 'Zoom based' peer support and social groups along with a variety of training and learning activities available both on line and in paper based form.

3. Conclusions

The Carers Strategy 2020-2025 sets out local system wide priorities based on the findings of the Healthwatch Carers Report, ADASS self-assessment, Survey of Adult Carers in England as well as extensive engagement carried out with carers in Derbyshire throughout 2019.

The Carers Strategy Delivery Group, led by DCC, will ensure delivery of the strategy action plan and in the current climate (created by COVID-19 with partial lockdown) we are considering how we can best undertake this work. Additionally we are working closely with Derbyshire Carers Association, to refocus the carers support service through the recovery and restoration phase, to ensure it is meeting the changing needs of Carers in Derbyshire.

Julie Vollar

Service Director Commissioning, Safeguarding & Performance

Jude Boyle

Commissioning Manager, Commissioning, Safeguarding & Performance